



Eighteen Souls All Told—Men, Women and Children—Lived Through the Long Arctic Night of Six Months with a Bit of Floating Ice for a Home.

SIX MONTHS ON AN ICEBERG!

The Unparalleled Story of Captain Tyson, Only Survivor of the Polaris Expedition and His Dreary Drift on a Block of Ice in Arctic Seas.

IN a few weeks Lieutenant Peary will start on his long heralded attempt to reach the pole by what is known as the "Greenland route."

It is probable therefore that the dawn of a new century will see one of two things: Either the discovery of the Pole or another great Arctic tragedy.

Will Peary be able to overcome the terrible difficulties of the Polar ice barrier? Polar history is full of death

The Polaris sailed up the Sound just as Peary will sail in a few days. In due time the vessel made its way through Smith's Sound, Kennedy Channel and Robeson's Channel.

Late in October, 1872, the Polaris was locked fast in the heavy pack ice off Littleton Island. For weeks the ship had been in the nip and practically helpless. She creaked and groaned unceasingly in every timber.

On the evening of October 15 there came a sudden alarm that the vessel had sprung a leak. Pumps were rigged and manned.

Esquimaux children, one of whom was an infant.

The long Arctic night had commenced, and when the ship broke away a heavy snow was falling.

The entire commissariat consisted of fourteen cans of pemmican, one can of dried apples, fourteen hams and eleven bags of bread. Two boats had been saved from the general wreck, and in these various attempts were made to reach the shore, but in vain.

Once they sighted the Polaris ten miles distant, and colors were hoisted. Again the vessel dropped behind the heavy bergs and

but it had to be done. Ten days after the separation from the Polaris Captain Tyson was so weak that he staggered as he walked.

In this emergency the Esquimaux killed and ate two of the dogs.

The last sight of the sun was had on October 26, and the long six months' night began in earnest. Within the next two weeks five dogs were shot for food, leaving only four. About the middle of November one of the Esquimaux shot a small seal.

Upon this Captain Tyson dined, eating raw, uncooked seal meat, hair, skin, blubber

to Captain Tyson with the explanation that the men had wolfish eyes. No further explanation was needed. The poor fellow feared that the sailors would kill and eat the Esquimaux men and their families.

In the fierce emergency of darkness the reckless sailors broke up one of the boats to light their snow hut. The daily allowance of rations had been reduced to six ounces of bread and five ounces of meat per man.

Toward the latter part of December, it began to grow lighter and the two Esquimaux reported that they could see seals under the ice. Food ten feet away and no means to get to it. The thought was maddening.

The Christmas breakfast of the miserable party consisted of four ounces of bread, two and a half ounces of pemmican per man and a small quantity of seal's blood. Only nine cans of pemmican and six bags of bread were left.

The two Esquimaux hunted daily desperately, but without success. They were hunting to save their wives and children from dying a more horrible death than that of starvation. They set traps in various places, hoping to catch any foxes or

Captain Tyson on the Proper Way to Reach the Pole.

To the Editor of the Journal:

Dear Sir: I have read with great interest of the coming expedition of Lieutenant Peary to the polar regions. As a man of some experience in that direction I will say that I do not think he will succeed in his design of reaching the pole.

The way to reach the north pole, according to my notion, is by the way of Franz Josef Land.

I believe that under reasonably favorable conditions the pole can be reached from Franz Josef Land in sixty days. The start ought to be made as early as possible in the Spring—that is to say, some time in April.

Leaving Franz Josef Land, they would step right out on the ice-fields stretching away to the northward. They would have to take with them good dogs to transport the equipments and stores and a light boat of wood; or, better yet, aluminum. They could not get along without the boat, inasmuch as they would be likely to come across open water from time to time. I am not a believer, however, in the theory that the pole is surrounded by open water; nor, on the other hand, do I think that it is in the midst of a great land mass. Probably there is an archipelago of islands up there, in the midst of an icy sea.

Regarding Peary's proposed expedition, I see no reason for supposing that he will get any further than he has already got, so long as he sticks to the Greenland route. The comparatively easy and sure path is the one I have indicated.

GEORGE E. TYSON.

Washington, O. C., June 30.



The Whaleboat in Which Captain Tyson and His Half-Starved Comrades Made Their Escape After Being Washed Off the Floe.

(From a Sketch Made 25 Years Ago.)

and failures.

The oldest Arctic explorer living is probably Captain George E. Tyson, now connected with the War Department in Washington. He is the last surviving officer of the ill-fated Polaris, in which Commander Charles Francis Hall was lost.

Read the story of Captain Tyson's drift down the Arctic seas for 1,500 miles on an ice floe with seventeen companions, and you will begin to realize the difficulties which Lieutenant Peary will encounter.

Used to Polar Seas.

Captain Tyson was thoroughly familiar with the Arctic regions before he was engaged as navigator and master of sledges by Commander Charles Francis Hall on the ill-fated Polaris expedition, which sailed from the Brooklyn Navy Yard on June 20, 1872.

Sailing Master Buddington, in a moment of excitement, ordered everything "thrown out on the ice."

Night had already fallen, and the sailors could scarcely see each other as they toiled away at the packages of clothing, instruments and provisions. The rumor of a leak turned out to be a false alarm. The ice began to crack all about the ship.

Sailing Master Buddington rushed to the side of the vessel and ordered the sailors to take the provisions as far back on the ice as possible. They were engaged in this work when there came a roar and a rattle like a heavy musketry fire, and the ship shook herself free from the ice and disappeared in the thick darkness, leaving Captain Tyson and seventeen human beings on the ice floe.

Captain Tyson Cast Away.

Besides Captain Tyson there were Frederick Meyers and the meteorologist of the expedition, the steward, the cook, six seamen, two Esquimaux men, and five Es-

quimaux children, one of whom was an infant. The long Arctic night had commenced, and when the ship broke away a heavy snow was falling.

The piece of ice left to the party of eighteen was about the area of a city block. After the first break others came in rapid succession. The weather was bitter cold, and prayers were constant that the ice would grow strong enough to enable the party to reach shore.

Snow houses were built, after the manner of the Esquimaux, and only two meals a day were allowed. To make matters worse, some hungry individual had begun to systematically rob the provision stores, in consequence of which a watch was set.

Six Months' Night Begins.

Captain Tyson established a regular rate of eleven ounces for adults and half rations for the children. It was pretty hard for some of the sailors to come down to this, and there was a good deal of grumbling,

and all.

The sailors were quartered in a large snow house of their own, while "Hans" and "Joe," the two Esquimaux, had built separate establishments for their wives and children. Captain Tyson lived with "Joe" and his wife, leaving the surplus sailors to themselves.

At the end of the first month of drifting all hopes of seeing the Polaris again had vanished. The little twilight that still remained left them early in December, and they drifted along in total darkness with the moaning and creaking polar ice all about them.

Living on Fox Meat.

A fox was shot, poor, scrawny, with almost no flesh on its frame. It was still cleanly picked, down to the bones. The daily allowance was apportioned out by ounces, and still the men appeared to grow weaker.

At the end of two months one of the Esquimaux brought his gun and handed it

seals that might make their way to the floe from neighboring bergs. Hans shot a seal, but lost him.

That night Hans's wife cooked a few pieces of dried seal skin that had been saved for patching clothes. The refuse of the oil lamp was eaten. The sailors supped on blubber and a few pieces of seal skin.

There was great rejoicing when "Joe" the Esquimaux shot a small seal. Among eighteen hungry persons it did not go very far. But it must be made to last not one meal but two.

A Scanty Bill of Fare.

On New Year's Captain Tyson dined on three feet of frozen seal's entrails and some blubber.

The last scraps of the seal had disappeared and the men had grown more desperate than ever when again came the welcome news that "Joe" had shot a seal.

Captain Tyson ordered the small animal to be taken to "Joe's" hut by the sailors.

The sailors disobeyed and conveyed it to their own habitation and divided it to suit themselves, leaving practically nothing to the poor man who killed it.

The men had become thoroughly frightened by their terrible hardships. Even the hardy Esquimaux, accustomed as they were to the cold and starvation, confessed that they had never endured such an ordeal.

On January 19, three months after the commencement of the drift, the sun reappeared. The sight of it was hailed with feelings of the deepest joy. It meant many things to the castaways, but more than all it meant added facilities for hunting.

The sight of the sun seemed to bring the miserable beings nearer to land, nearer to humanity and nearer to safety. Their drift, however, was not half over. The return of the sun did not seem to affect the thermometer, and half the time the mercury was frozen.

Late in January the last dog died, being literally starved to death. Frozen seal skin became a regular diet and there was precious little of that. The Esquimaux children cried constantly with hunger.

Ice Floe Breaking Up.

On March 17 the ice floe began to break up. It cracked and rattled and rolled with a sound like thunder. It resembled the turmoil of an earthquake. Eventually the floe broke near the spot where the castaways had built their huts. Other pieces broke away until the floe upon which the party

was floating was only seventy-five by one hundred yards in dimensions.

To make matters worse they were surrounded by crashing and grinding icebergs.

On April 1 the party took to the boat and after being almost swamped succeeded in reaching a large floe. As the days passed matters became worse for the little party. The ice again began to crack and split. They were eventually washed out of their huts by the sea and again took to the boat.

Once more they landed on a large ice floe, where they managed to exist for a week. Then the sea began to break over them. All the provisions were placed in the boat with the women and children. Each succeeding wave would wash the boat all but off the ice. The men clinging to the runways would rush it back, ready for another deluge.

In this way the entire night of April 20 was passed with the thermometer close to zero. They had all but given up hope when, at 4:30 o'clock on the morning of April 24, over six months after they were cast away, a steamer was sighted bearing down on them. She was soon lost, however, and the wretched beings again fell into a state of despondency.

For days afterwards no other steamer was sighted. She proved to be a sealer, the Thetis, from Conception Bay, Newfoundland.

The castaways were taken on board, fed, bathed and pampered to their hearts' content.

They had drifted over 1,500 miles with nothing under them but a piece of ice and the deep sea.



G.A. Coffin

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(From the Description by Capt. Tyson.)